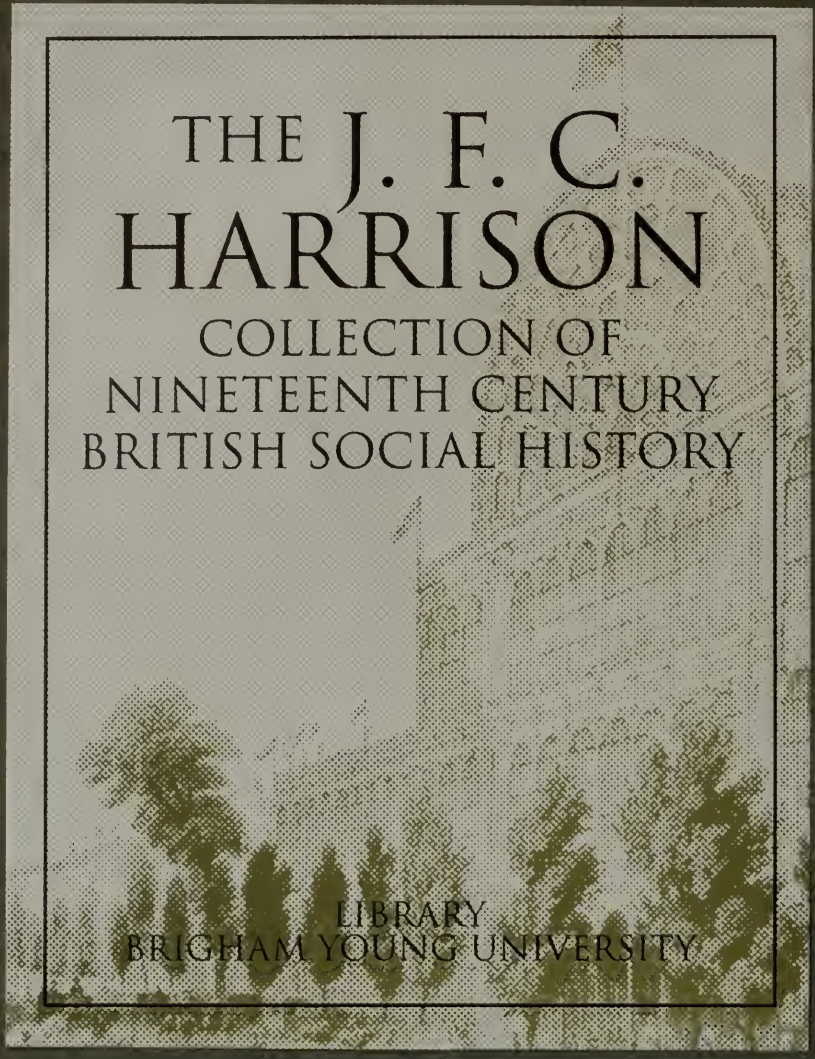


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THE ARTICLE ON

MACHINE-BREAKING.

(In answer to "Swing.")

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The compiler of the following remarks some time ago received a letter from "Swing," which, though it was not signed 'your loving Swing,' was at all events such as no person in his senses could complain of. It in fact contained only some caricatures of the New Police; beyond which, little could be gathered from the whole, except that "Swing" wrote an uncommonly good business hand. The receiver feels a great desire to answer it civilly; and the more, because he really considers his correspondent to be an ill-used gentleman. To lay a tax with the express purpose of preventing the poor from obtaining information in the only way that was found to be effectual, and then to hang them by the neck for being ill-informed and ignorant, is a horror which it must be stupidity in a man not to feel, and unwarrantable fear to keep to himself if he thinks so. What a rout was made in England, when three or four ministers in a neighbouring country, after destroying hundreds of lives in an attempt to establish arbitrary power, were in some chance of losing their heads in turn! Compare this with what has been meted out to poor wretches, who though pressed by the extremity of suffering, positively did not either by design or accident corporally injure a single individual; and see how much better it is to be a minister, than one ministered to.

T. C. Hansard, Printer, 32, Paternoster-row, London.

ON

MACHINE-BREAKING.

ART. XIII.—1. *Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages, delivered before the University of Oxford, in Easter Term*, 1830. *With a Preface on the Causes and Remedies of the present Disturbances.* By Nassau William Senior, of Magdalen College, A. M.; late Professor of Political Economy.—1830.

2. *Correspondence between the Right Hon. R. Wilmot Horton and a Select Class of the Members of the London Mechanics Institution, formed for investigating the most efficient remedies for the present distress among the labouring classes in the United Kingdom; together with the Resolutions unanimously adopted by the Class. Also a Letter from the Right Hon. R. Wilmot Horton to Dr. Birkbeck, President of the Institution: and his Answer.*—1830.

3. *The Life and History of Swing, the Kent Rick-burner.* Written by himself.—1830.

IF Noah and his family, when they came out of the ark, had held a council upon the best way of providing themselves with the comforts of dry land, it would have been a strange line of argument for one of the household to have pointed to the stock in trade which had escaped the deluge, and have said, "This is a plough; and by harnessing the clean beasts to it, you would do six times as much work as with a spade; therefore break the plough, and take the spade. Your wife too has a spindle, with which she can spin so many threads an hour; but I could show her a way, that would not spin half as much. Let us be machine-breakers; and then we shall all be comfortable."

This would be such gross absurdity, that it is hardly practicable to set about stating wherein the absurdity consists. It is like a man's cutting off his legs, in order that he may have the pleasure of hopping upon crutches. Noah's brief answer would be, that he worked to *have;* and that the more he had, the better. The wildest enemy of machinery would never dream of executing such a principle in his own immediate concerns; or of taking the worse instrument when he might take the better, for the simple pleasure of having more to do. The case, therefore, does not present a parallel to the existing question on the subject of machinery.

Take, then, another state of mankind, as for instance Abra-

ham's; who had men-servants and women-servants, and a steward to look after them. Now if the steward had proposed, that the men should be set to dig instead of plough, and the women weave cloth with their fingers instead of using the best piece of loom-machinery the country was acquainted with, and that the reason for all this was, that without it there would be no possibility of keeping them in employment,—the answer of Abraham would be much the same as Noah's, but with the addition, that if their work could be saved in one way, he would be answerable for finding them work in some other;—that if the women could make two pieces of cloth instead of one, his wife should wear two at once, or else wear one that by its beauty should take as much making as two.

But if the steward was an obstinate person, and had an anti-machinery maggot in his head, he might reply, that if each servant could do twice as much as before, it was evident only half the number would be wanted, and therefore half must be either sold to the Midianites, or left to perish in the desert, which would be very hard upon the individuals. To which his master would reply, that if the gift of doing double work should fall on all of them at once as from the clouds, there might be some possibility of a part of them being an encumbrance; but if there was any thing gradual in the operation, he, the master, would be answerable for work springing up for them as fast as they could find the means of doing it, and that not a hoof should be left behind in consequence of improvements in the method. And if the master, as there appears no reason to doubt, was fond of seeing every body satisfied about him, he would take an opportunity of representing to his people and followers, that it would be hard if the improvements did not in some degree turn to the advantage of every one of them;—that if there was more corn by ploughing than by digging, there must needs be better feeding for themselves, their wives, and their little ones; and that if cloth was easier made and more abundant, it was scarcely possible that the result should not be that the children would come by three shirts a-year instead of two. There would be no doubt that a principal portion of the advantage would fall to the share of the rich master and his immediate relatives; but it would also be certain, that the servants down to the lowest would be better and not worse for the alteration, and that they would be unreasonable if they raised a hue-and-cry against the change.

This then, if any body has thought worth while to follow it, appears to let into the whole secret of the good and evil of machinery. It is a good to every body, working classes in-

cluded, if only it does not come so rapidly as to throw great masses of people out of employment, faster than the consequent demand for hands in other branches can take them up. If the community in general by dint of machinery get a piece of cloth for six shillings instead of ten, they will to a certainty expend the four shillings in something else that they would not have expended it in before ;—unless it can be proved that they will throw it into the sea. If therefore there is a diminution of employment for cloth-makers to the amount of four shillings (which is undeniably the case), there is at the same time an increase of expenditure on some other arts and crafts to the same amount. But if other arts and crafts are affected in a like manner by machinery, each of these throws an increase of expenditure on some others, among which the craft of cloth-making will undoubtedly have a share. And if wages fall when employment is diminished, they rise when it is increased. So that provided only the introduction of machinery be gradual and general, there is an evident tendency towards a balance ; and though nobody can say that the balance shall be so complete as to leave every thing exactly as before, it is plain that the final alteration is the *difference* of the particular alterations, and not the *sum*. But all this time, there is a clear gain to the consumers at every step, of the whole amount of what is saved in each instance by machinery,—or what in the case of the cloth was represented by four shillings. So that while the effects upon the different operatives, in respect of their quantity of employment, go on balancing and counteracting each other, and are in the end next to none at all,—the gains of the consumers (of whom the operatives make part) go on increasing and accumulating by every particular addition. Or to turn the subject the other side up, if machinery of all kinds in all places could be annihilated at once by an Act of Parliament or a thunderbolt, the quantity of employment for operatives would on the whole be just what it is now ; but the operatives would take their share, with every body else, of the consequences of cloth being made with fingers instead of with a loom. That is, they would wear just so much cloth, and of such quality, as could be made with fingers by the exertion of the same time and labour which make what they now wear from the loom ; and the same in other things. And note further, that this includes only the home trade. But if ever foreign commerce should cease to be prohibited by Act of Parliament, then there must be taken into the account all the good things that might be obtained from foreigners in exchange for the products of machinery, and the share which the operatives would

have in these good things by dint of the increased employment which would be created by the demand for manufactured goods.

The blunder therefore of desiring to put down machinery, is in the main and in the long run the same as the contemptible fallacy of restrictions upon trade, which is pressed upon the operatives by the supporters of the Corn Laws. The apparent gain made at every step of restriction either on trade or on machinery, is balanced by an equal loss to some other portion of the industrious classes somewhere else, and there is a clear unbalanced loss of the amount in question to the consumers in the aggregate besides. But the operatives are to be persuaded, that if John, Thomas, Richard, and Henry, get sixpence each, by at the same time taking twopence out of the pocket of each of the other three, John, Thomas, Richard, and Henry make a gain; and not only this, but that they do so if John, Thomas, Richard and Henry in their quality of consumers, lose another sixpence among them every time besides. This is the sum and substance of the system that calls itself *protection to trade*. It is a plan to set every body to rob the rest, and count the plunder as a general gain. The subject, as relates to trade, has been examined at length in a former article*, under the illustration of the monkeys in Exeter Change who chose to feed out of each other's pans; where it was shown that the land monopoly is the great baboon of all, for whose benefit the lesser apes are persuaded to aid in keeping up the fraud.

Machinery then, like the rain of heaven, is a present blessing to all concerned, provided it comes down by drops, and not by tons together; and any thing which prevents its free and expanded operation, has an effect of the same kind as would be produced if the rain could be collected into water-spouts. It remains therefore to be seen, what laws and human institutions have done towards securing the free diffusion of the advantages derivable from God's gift of ingenuity to man. And here the first thing apparent in our own country is, that the aristocracy have made a law, that no use shall be derived from it at all. They have determined by Act of Parliament, that men may invent as many machines as they think proper, but shall not be allowed to sell the produce; or which comes to the same thing, shall not be allowed to sell for what is wanted in return. The whole misery about machinery,—every atom and fragment of suffering, alarm, and wretchedness directly or indirectly consequent thereon,—are the pure and necessary

* Article on Free Trade, from No. XXIII. Published separately, Price Three Halfpence.

result of the gross fraud and half-witted idiotic cruelty perpetrated by the majority of the landlords upon the rest of their own order and of the community. The compiler of this is a landlord; he has a qualification for a county; but he is not such a dolt as to believe that he is gaining by the profligacy of the Corn Laws, even if he had no other objection to the fact. Like every body else, he has been obliged to reduce his rents; but he did it with a stipulation, that they should be raised again on the removal of the Corn Laws. All rotten sheep are his to pay for; complaint and misery, the fit consequences of cruelty and injustice, are in every department both of the live stock and the dead. And in addition to this, he has to struggle with the impossibility of putting his children into any calling they can live by. His only hope is that what 'Swing' leaves, the poor-rates may speedily swallow; and if the operation be but quick and general, the result may be some comfort for his posterity. It is a hard case that there should be no hindering men from ruining others, except by their finding out that they have ruined themselves; but if it is so, there is nothing to be done but pray for the quickest completion of the process.

It will probably be answered, that the distress just now is in the agricultural districts; and how can it be shown that this would be helped by the removal of the Corn Laws? Easily; as any person may see who has not a reason for blindness in his pocket. When the quantity of food procurable is limited by law, and the population has increased till it presses against this limit, there is no difficulty in seeing that the misery thus produced must extend itself to the agricultural population as well as others. Only a given quantity of agricultural labourers can be wanted to raise a given quantity of corn, and therefore, since all other employments are equally circumscribed, the increase above the given quantity must be starved on the same principle that puppies are drowned; and the starved puppies are what the landlords call superfluous population. They make a law that there shall not be food for more than a certain number, and therefore the rest shall be executed as superfluous. But if this is to be the case with dogs in general, it is clear that the agricultural breeds can have no prospect of escape. The plea that the sufferings of the agricultural labourers would be increased by the removal of the Corn Laws, is therefore only one of the juggleries by which those who have more cunning impose upon those who have less. It might not give instant relief, or there might even be an increase of pain on the commencement of the process, especially if gone about too precipitately; as is the case in the cure of a broken leg. But the great cause of evil would be

removed, without which there is no question but of the sufferer's being left to die. The plea therefore is one of those subterfuges, which no educated man puts forward with a grave countenance without having an interest in its success.

But to the less educated classes,—to those who have not been in the habit of considering that to bolt straight forward is not always the way to get out of the bog,—it is quite reasonable and to be expected that the assertion that the miseries of the agricultural labourers come by the Corn Laws, should present considerable difficulties; and they may even pronounce it at first sight ridiculous and absurd, in which opinion they will be encouraged by the horse-laughs of those among their betters who are driving them upon destruction. On the credit therefore of some good-will shown towards the suffering classes here and elsewhere, the agricultural labourers in the disturbed districts—the men who are marching under the banner of 'Swing,' if he *has* a banner—are invited to sit down under the first convenient hedge, and engage the best reader in their company to explain to them the following case. Suppose then a farmer,—or a farmer's labourer, for they are both in the same plight,—has two sons and two daughters, which it is well known is about the number that, taking one with another, a married couple has. And suppose, as is evidently the fact, that there are a number of other people in the same circumstances in the neighbourhood, and the hope and wish of the parents is, that the sons of one shall marry the daughters of another, and sit down in some honest calling to maintain themselves in godliness and decency as their fathers did. Now let us see, what chance they have for it. Fifteen years ago came the Corn Laws; in other words, an Act to prevent the manufacturers from exchanging their work for corn with foreigners. And the farmers and farmer's labourers crowed loud, and thought it was a fine thing for *them*;—that is, fifteen years ago they crowed, but do they crow now? It shall be granted that when this unjust restriction on the manufacturers began, it was an advantage to the man whose trade it was to hold the plough. The quantity of land which was to grow corn in England was artificially increased; and this made more farms to let, and more farmer's labourers wanted to work upon them; and therefore it was easier for the farmer and the farmer's man to find employment for himself, and for his two sons and two daughters as they grew up upon his hands. There was increased room made for them to spread, at other people's expense; and therefore they went on merrily, and spread accordingly. But this could not last for ever. Allow the fact to

be, that one fourth more land in England was brought into cultivation by the Corn Laws. It is plain that it will be merry times for ploughmen while they are breeding up to this mark; but why are they to be merry when they *have* bred up to it? Is it the slightest consolation, comfort, or advantage to them, that they are now *five* hundred thousand poor starving devils, instead of being *four*? Or is it any comfort to the higher farmer who sees himself crushed out of all possibility of livelihood by the competition of men for farms, that there are ten of them to bid against each other instead of eight? Impress therefore on yourselves, you whole regiment of Swing, that if the Corn Laws were a fraud upon other people, they were, like all other frauds, of short-lived advantage to the owner; and that you are now come to the time when, unless you can live upon the meat and drink of fifteen years ago, the roguery that directed the plan has at all events done *you* no good, whatever it may have done to any body else.

But you will say,—and it's all right,—that this has only proved, that you are where you would have been before; and therefore you have only to be thankful for what you have had already. But hear more; there is a 'bit to follow.' See how the case would have stood with you, if there had never been Corn Laws at all. It may be quite true, that instead of *five* hundred thousand farmers and farmer's labourers, there would only have been *four;*—that is to say, there would only have been four hundred thousand of you that would have been farmers and farmer's labourers; and the rest would have been somewhere else. And what is more, they would have been living merrily somewhere else, and every body would have been merry, and you would have been merry too; for it is nothing but the impossibility of finding employment for your two sons and two daughters, either in farming business *or in any thing else,* which drives you up in heaps to starve one another. If two thirds of the farmers sons could get comfortable situations although not farmers, it needs no extraordinary wisdom to see that the pressure of competition among farmers would speedily diminish, and farming become a good trade again for the remainder; and the same with farmer's labourers. None of you have ever taken an oath that your two sons and two daughters shall be nothing but what their parents were. The labourer never had any objection to see one of his boys set up in a little shop, or another go creditably to sea in the employment of the merchant that buys his pork at Christmas; or to have his daughters married to his neighbours sons as soon as they had succeeded in any of those callings. The

farmer used to exult, when his landlord's influence established one son upon the high stool in a merchant's counting-house; for there *were* merchants in those days,—it was before the landlords had spoilt all by their selfish tyranny. All these trades and callings,—that is to say, every branch of manufactures and commerce,—would have been brisk and flourishing. Our sailors would have been 'rampaging' over the world; and now they are dying in the streets, because the merchants have nothing to carry or bring home, and Indiamen flog them beyond endurance. An industrious man might have lived by his industry, though not perhaps in one given calling that should be fixed upon. It used to be so; and would have been so still, if England could have held her own against the invasion of the squirearchy. And to this we must come back; or else go on in the present miserable state of things to the end of time.

The question then is, how we are to come back. And here it may be agreed, that the change must not be all at once, for then it would create pressure on the agricultural labourers faster than the openings made in other ways could take it off. And heaven knows that the agricultural labourers, like all other labourers, are miserable enough. Nobody wants to diminish the sufferings of others by increasing theirs; but to get rid of the whole burthen of misery, which is breaking every body's back for the use and benefit of those who never work at all. Therefore, as said before, it must be done gently. Nobody, for instance, could complain, if the mischief was as long in taking off as it was in laying on; and this, or something like it, would be done by taking off a shilling a year from all the rates on foreign corn till they were gone. But it would not be difficult to show, that a quicker course than this would be for the general good; though this would be better than nothing, and is the very least that men in their senses should think of agreeing to accept. Get the mischief into a way of being ended some time, and then take all other methods in aid that ingenuity can devise; but do not let the man lie perishing with his broken leg without thinking of having it set, and cry "O lord! "O lord! why that would be a six weeks business at the "least."

Once more then, the 'deluded followers of Swing' as the newspapers call them, are begged to sit down and give their serious attention to the assurance here given them, that however unlikely it may at first appear, the Corn Laws are the origin, cause, and maintenance, of their present sufferings, and that they have only to chuse between going on as they are for ever, or joining with the rest of their countrymen in a

demand for the total removal by the quickest method that prudence shall direct. It is not expected that they should find this out at once; any more than men who have vastly greater opportunities of gaining knowledge have found things out at once. But what is requested of them is, that they will think of it, that they will attend to it, that they will turn it over in their minds, and see if it may not after all come under the proverb, that what looks the longest way about, is sometimes the nearest way home. Let them take it to the schoolmaster, let them discuss it at the blacksmith's shop, let it be inquired into on Sundays at the bakehouse and in the church porch. And above all things get it to the little farmers and the great; let nobody fall into the error of believing it is a question in which only the paupers are concerned. A trial has been made of robbery, and it has only brought the farmers and farmer's labourers into a state of indescribable misery; would it not be wise to try honesty, and see if it may not lead to better things? Was there ever a piece of dishonesty yet, that by God's just judgment did not in some way fall on the heads of the inventors in the end? Make up your minds upon this point. See your way clearly through the wretched deception by which the landlords have attempted to raise their own rents and send *you* to the poor-house. Burn no more haystacks, but join heartily with your countrymen of the manufacturing districts in a legal demand for the removal of the Corn Laws, which have ground you all to the dust together; and you will be astonished to see what sort of people will be ready to take your part. Foreign trade has been prohibited; call for its being opened. You are starving as it is; try whether you will be starved twice over, by the country's having foreign trade. Make some inquiry too, into the sort of men who recommend this to you. Ask if they have any interest in deceiving you; or if they ever tried to deceive any body, whether they had an interest or not. Inquire too, whether they are inferior in education, or in the habit of finding out the reason of one thing from another thing, to those who take the other side. And if they are not, then let them have at least a hearing, and such confidence afterwards as you shall think that they deserve.

This is what may be said to the suffering classes. If there is any need to defend the saying it, the defence will not be far to seek. When men from some cause, no matter what, find themselves at sea in the same bottom, and some urgent peril begins to press on the floating community; there are two courses for every man to take, who has ever pretended to addict himself to the study of sea-borne business. One is, to go

below; and, if the danger be very pressing, to go to bed. The other is, to stand the peril out, quailing before no man's fears, crouching before no man's folly, rising in loudness in support of reason in proportion as others may try to put it down, and braving the risk of being sent to make the land in a whale's belly, sooner than yield an inch to the knavish lubbers that have brought us into the scrape. It is in this spirit, that new allies proceed to join the little company, who having leisure and education, are too proud to turn them against the public interests, and too wise to use them against their own. Not that the coincidence may be perfect; or the agreement so complete, as not to leave room for friendly dispute in better times. But it is quite sufficient for pulling at the same rope, till at all events the ship's head is laid the right way, and something like a course is steering for bringing her into port.

Suppose now, the peril were, a failure of provisions; and there the gallant ship was laid,—*hove to*, as the sea monsters call it,—with the crew, that is to say the vulgar hawlers, dying about the decks, and here and there a portly person engaged in calculating how many pieces a biscuit could be broken into, and whether the captain's fowls could be reduced to five quarts of water in the place of six. Imagine such a scene, and estimate the boldness of the individual who should maintain, that all this might be well as an accessory, but the first thing was to turn the head towards some place where provisions grew; and that no plea of the urgency of earlier relief, could atone for the procrastination of this only final chance of safety. Nor would the case be altered, even though it could be proved that the suffering would be temporarily increased by the efforts necessary for the process of deliverance. It has not pleased heaven to make remedies always luxuries, more particularly where the evils endured have been the consequences of men's own misconduct. When the community has allowed itself so long to drift down the stream of folly, for the sake of the paltry baits held out to individual cupidity, it has no right to expect that the way back should be as easy as the going, and may thank its stars if ever it finds itself on safe ground again, either with or without the salvation of the individuals that led it into the mischief.

There is no use in keeping back the truth. A particular class, the landed interest as they rejoice to style themselves, succeeded in persuading the community that nothing could go well unless they had their way. How much of this was self-deception, heaven only knows; but if they succeeded in making fools of other people, there is no known reason why to a

certain extent they should not have succeeded in the same way with themselves. At all events they had their way; and the first thing they did, was to prohibit the exchange of the poor man's industry for bread. Whether the manufacturers, if they had haply got the upper hand instead, would have laid a tax on home-grown corn, by way of increasing the quantity that should be bought with their goods from abroad, is what there has not been opportunity to try; but if they had, it would not have been one whit a more outrageous and barefaced wrong, a more wanton and reckless abuse of power, or a fouler and more degrading violence for a civilized society to submit to. If men under such an exertion of tyranny on the part of the manufacturing interest, had risen in masses and been put down by the sword and the executioner, it might be true enough that this evil was an inevitable consequence, and for that very reason there would be two evils instead of one to be reckoned for with the manufacturers whenever the day of justice should arrive. There would be no use in tampering with such a rank oppression. It would be an ill which those who were given to bear, would bear; and those who were not, would not; and the end would be, either the timely retreat of the plunderers of society, or a waiting till public indignation had risen high enough to drive them from their hold.

And it does not follow, that, if humanity was suffering under such an infliction from the manufacturers, the efforts by which it was put down would all be directed by the purest reasoning and the most exact statistics. The buccaneers of the society must make up their minds to take what might befall them. There would be no use in their crying out, that *this* starving wretch was out of the line of political economy, and *that other* was a bad practical philosopher. All these errors would be trifling peccadilloes, compared with the grand stalking wrong, that was at the bottom of the well or ill directed resistance of the community. Nothing can be more eminently typical of passive moderation, joined to considerable powers both of offence and defence, than a drove of oxen under the guidance of humanity and wisdom; but let them be once goaded into madness by the feeling of intolerable suffering, and it is no excuse for the authors of the mischief, that they will stick a peer of parliament as soon as the basest of their persecutors. The ignorant and the poor,—those who are ignorant because they are poor, and poor because they are ignorant, and whom laws have been passed to make both one and the other,—cannot be expected to reason like doctors in divinity, while suffering under evils the smallest of which would fill a gazette if it could

by possibility happen to the authors of their pain;—evils as distinctly referable in all their branches to the voluntary and determined acts of those who are the causes of their infliction, as the sounds of a musical instrument are to the striking of the keys;—evils which they have been told over and over, and will be told again tomorrow and the day after that, exist simply because their betters would have it so, and because the portions of the higher classes who think they gain by wrong are more numerous, united, and active than those of the same classes who set themselves in opposition to it. It is no secret; the members of the existing government avowedly hold office by the confession of the necessity for reform; and never in the history of mankind was reform so necessary, as in a country whose commercial policy is one continuous fraud upon the industrious classes, for the benefit of those whose trade and calling it is to live without working. If the labouring man eats bread, a payment is to be made for the maintenance of one portion of the aristocracy,—there's no mistake, there can be no mistake,—the aristocracy; though the receivers themselves are losing more at one end than they are gaining at the other, with the possible exception of those who are born to the right of providing for their children out of the public purse. If he aspires to tea, he must pay for the support of another portion somewhere else; and if he dreams of sugar, he must keep another; and to crown all, if liberation from any of these abuses is demanded for him, he is told plainly that there shall be no remission of the abuse unless he buys it at full value from the holder. He is the horse, the ass, the mule, who is to be saddled with every 'splendid *lazzarone*' that finds himself too lazy to walk. It is not enough that he is to abstain from his rich neighbour's property, and even to defend it at the hazard of his life when called upon; but this property is to be held imperfect and but half conducive to the enjoyments of the owner, unless it can be employed to double itself out of the basket of the poor. If the world's history were looked through, there would not—with the single exception of negro slavery—be found so glaring and huge an instance of the abuse of power and the general misery consequent on giving one selfish class the right of legislation for the rest, as is presented by the commercial policy of this most ill-used country.

The puritans were fond of speculating, on what a man in their place of torment would do and say, if an offer were made to give him one more trial in the present world. All perdition comes, by not thinking of this in time. If Napoleon could have re-enacted the hundred days, what a different con-

clusion would certainly have been come to. If the French *ex*-ministers could commence where Napoleon left them, how carefully would they turn their path from leading to the Luxembourg. And when their successors shall have caused revolution, with the cession of twice as much as would have satisfied if given, how willingly would they retrace their steps, if gods or men would give the faculty. So if a whig ministry could begin again where it stands at present, six months after a whelming revolution has been brought on, how carefully would it eschew the debility, the tergiversation, which induced the mischief. All revolutions come by there being nobody who had sense to join the people, and give them half of what was the next day taken by violence. Does the English ministry believe, that the people will not have something in the end? And does it think that what would have satisfied them in November, will satisfy them in March? Or, perchance, does it wish to wait for a few more apparitions of the Sibyl with her books? The inference drawn by the people will only be, that the ministry is lying by to measure forces, and that consequently what they finally obtain, will be in exact proportion to the energy with which they make their feelings known. It is as true under one administration as under another, that 'Never by any other means than the making the ruling few uneasy, can the oppressed many obtain a particle of relief.'* If there was a disposition to make an exception in the present case, it has been much enfeebled by procrastination. The people are intreated every where, to spare no effort, omit no exertion, which may make the Whigs 'uneasy' at the prospect of swerving from their promises.

The conductors of the present work have of necessity a certain number of friends, who will demand to see *their* statement of the points on which the community ought to stand, as the immoveable conditions of any confidence in, or support to, the present ministers. First, then, the immediate removal of the Six Acts; and, either at once or by a small number of definite gradations, of all the taxes affecting newspapers and advertisements. If any vested interests present themselves in opposition, let them be told to thank heaven for having gone on so long in their iniquity, and to content themselves with at all events the smallest portion of gradation and delay. Let the pitiful amount received by the revenue from the wrong, be laid on any thing that can be seen, or felt, or heard, or tasted, or smelt. Let it be laid on our heads or on our heels, or on any thing that is between. But let us be rid of the gross scandal and open

* Bentham.

shame, of paying a tax for being blindfolded, in order to be afterwards led by the nose where the bear-leaders may please. Let it be stated without passion or animosity, but with the decision of men who rest on a geometrical proposition, that an administration which begins by representing the necessity of preventing the communication of men's thoughts and wants, is one that may be submitted to, but never treated with. Secondly, a substantial alteration in the arrangement and extent of the elective franchise, with the protection of the Ballot to its general exercise. Thirdly, the contemporaneous removal of the Corn Laws and of the pretended protections given to manufactures in return, by any gradations that shall assign a period for their entire termination; and the maintaining of the revenue, if necessary, by a tax on property, with a just scale of rates increasing with the magnitude of the amount. In other words, let there be a tax that shall be paid *once*, even though accompanied with some unpleasantnesses in the collection; and not a tax that shall be paid ten times over in its consequences, in order that a certain number of individuals may have the pleasure of thinking they jockey each other in the shares. These points are what the Sibyl is advised to stand on now; and there are as many more, ready to be added, if she is obliged to call again.

Of the publications at the head of this Article, the first is from a quarter in which the science of Political Economy—which is in truth only the science of not being cheated by our betters—is under obligations for an introduction to academical rank in the University of Oxford. It would be affectation, not to own the satisfaction felt at the close accordance between the contents of the Three Lectures, and the conclusions derived from a separate course of study as conducted in great part in the pages of this Review. Of the Lectures themselves, it is not easy to say anything so brief, as that they correspond to the Three Lectures on the Mercantile Theory of Wealth from the same quarter, which have been characterized as 'the ablest and most entertaining publication on a question of political economy, that has appeared since the time of Adam Smith.' References in support of this character may be made to the *cork-screw maker* in page 47,—to the laced coats of our ancestors in page 53,—and to the impossibility of a man's income not being spent, in page 54. This last is interesting, as it bears on the newest plan for the restoration of the late French dynasty, by the refusal of its partisans to spend their incomes. 'Quâcunque viâ datâ, every man must spend his income [*should there not have been added*, or leave it for somebody else to spend?]; and the less he spends on himself, the more remains for the rest of the world.'

On part of Mr. M'Culloch's celebrated examination, it is remarked,

'This reasoning assumes that the landlord, while resident in Ireland, himself personally devours all the cattle produced on his estates; for in no other supposition can there be the very same amount of commodities for the people of Ireland to subsist upon, whether their cattle are retained in Ireland or exported.'—p. 27.

Without inquiring whose arguments might be contradicted by it, is not the real solution, that the cattle are bred because they can be exported, and would not be bred, or not to the same extent, if they could not?

In the last page will be found the exposure of the fallacy, much wrought on at the present moment, that it would be a burthen on the country to disband soldiers, and a relief to take on more. Just as if the money saved by the disbandment, would not be employed in finding support for as many people somewhere else; and the opposite.

The Preface is the only part on which any serious alteration can be suggested. It is completely true, that '*the rate of wages depends on the extent of the fund for the maintenance of labourers, compared with the number of labourers to be maintained.*' The rate, therefore, may manifestly be affected at two different ends; one by increasing or diminishing 'the extent of the fund,' and the other by increasing or diminishing 'the number of labourers.' The Corn Laws are the great engine by which 'the fund' is voluntarily and artificially diminished; and the objection to the Preface is, that, though it does not overlook the Corn Laws altogether, it does not put them into their due place. For instance, there is room for voting a point-blank amendment on the proposition that

'The principal cause of the calamities that we are witnessing, has been the disturbance which the Poor Laws, as at present administered in the South of England, have created in the most extensive and the most important of all political relations, the relation between the employer and the labourer.'—*p.* vi.

The principal cause is not in the Poor Laws, but the Corn Laws. If—to borrow from an illustration formerly employed*—a number of rats were caged up and supplied with a limited quantity of food, and encouraged to multiply till they starved each other by the subdivision of the allowance; a disturbance in the mode of feeding,—in the poor laws of the rat community,—might be the proximate cause of a tremendous uproar; but there

* Article on Free Trade, from No. XXIII. Published separately, Price Three Halfpence.

would be no doubt that the other, the shutting up, was the primary cause, and the cause on the removal of which the cessation of the evil would entirely depend. The greatest objection is therefore to be felt to the substitution of any palliatives for the removal of the primary cause. Let the primary cause be removed, or put in a course of gradual but certain extinction, and then palliate by as many ways as can be devised; but till this is done, all palliatives lie under the predicament of tending to the preservation of the leading evil.

The palliative proposed at present, is to colonize; in other words, to force the people of England to breed, as is done by the negroes in some of the West Indian islands, for exportation. To which the direct answer is, that nobody has a right to make laws which shall force the people of England to transport themselves. They love their own country; and will not have it made uninhabitable, to please the aristocracy. The plan of the landed aristocracy is this; that England shall have no more corn than *they* shall sell, and then the competition for it will ensure high prices; but to diminish the danger of resistance that might ensue, the people shall be taxed to pay for sending one another abroad. The transportation is to be the landlords *valve;* which shall prevent the machine from blowing up, but leave the owners as much pressure as without danger can be enjoyed. They will be content without *all* the pressure, because it is too dangerous; but they will have as much as with safety can be left. They have taken all they dare from the people by the Corn Laws; and now they come forward to say they want *twelve millions more,* to pay for carrying them into transportation. They have made the country untenable; and now they want to tax the inhabitants, to carry them away. The English might be happy and increasing at home; but it suits an overbearing order that they shall neither be happy nor increasing, and therefore they must pay twelve millions for being carried abroad. This plan of Emigration, so long as it is not preceded by an arrangement for the extinction of the Corn Laws, is a thing to be resisted *à l'outrance,*—which means with tooth and nail. If once the people of England submit to it, they will be the landlords breeding cattle for ever and for ever. The manufacturing and commercial classes may give up all hope of breaking their chains; and the country at large will settle down into one mass of slavery under the owners of the soil, hopeless because modified, and interminable because the oppressors have had the cunning to provide for the escape of what they would be unable to control.

In this state of things it is impossible not to impress upon the

manufacturing and commercial interests, the importance of seizing the opportunity when their oppressors are embarrassed with the consequences of their oppression in the South, to come forward with united voices for the removal of the great national wrong. No man of common sense says, Because my enemy has his hands full, therefore I will wait till they are empty. No man in the common concerns of life, attends to the puling representations of a plunderer, that it would be unpleasant to him to be pressed just now, and therefore he hopes his pursuers will stay till it is more convenient to him. The master manufacturers are perfectly able to distinguish between the rights of property, and maintaining men in the power of taking other people's property. The operatives also, instead of squabbling, like the rats, for wages which the masters are prevented by law from being able to give, will join the universal cry of 'We will not keep the landed aristocracy.' How is a master to pay wages, if the landed aristocracy make a law against the goods being exchanged for what is wanted in return? The landlords are aware of their danger, and will undoubtedly push the Emigration scheme with all their might. And if they succeed, they will have

'Slipt the slave's collar on, and snapt the lock.'

The Correspondence and letters connected with the London Mechanics Institution, are open to the same objection of substituting the proximate cause of the evil for the primary. They all dwell upon the means of diminishing the numbers in the cage, without adverting to the simple Act of Parliament by which the rats are caged at all. Thus when the President states that 'Excess of population, absolute and relative, is the occasion of our recent and immediate oppression,' he states what is irresistible and true. But when he proceeds to say 'an excess the result of *peace*,' he should have said 'of the Corn Laws which followed upon the peace.' The multitude, the rank and file, of the London Mechanics Institution are begged to sift this difference. It certainly is to be lamented, that a mass of well-meaning Mechanics in Southampton Buildings should have unanimously come to a determination 'that there do not appear to be any natural and unforced means of profitably increasing the demand for labour in the United Kingdom to such an extent as to absorb the existing redundancy of the supply of labour,'—and have overlooked the fact, that the landlords have prohibited labour from being exchanged for the only things for which there is a demand.

Taxes, as they affect the labouring classes, may be divided

into those which will be ultimately shifted upon the employers, and which therefore produce only a temporary operation on the labourers, *viz.* during the time in which the shift is taking place, —and those which act, and are intended to act, as a prohibition upon the exchange of labour in certain quarters where it would otherwise be effected. An instance of the first may be the removal of the tax on beer; which will be a good to the labourers, only till their employers can find opportunity to screw them out of the amount by the reduction of their wages. It is not affirmed that this is not a good,—but that it is a fleeting good, and one of which the whole amount is never great. To represent it therefore as a *great* good to the labouring classes, would be a fraud; and if the labouring classes have been led to accept it as a *great* good, they have been deceived. Two years might perhaps be stated as the limit during which its operation may be sensible;—on the principle that in the variations consequent on one revolution of the seasons, the greatest part of the advantage to the labourers will be in some shape or other screwed out of their wages, and that any thing that may be left the first year will be clean swept away in another. Of the other kind of taxes, the Corn Laws and other restrictions upon foreign trade are instances; and these fall on the labouring classes in the same way that the cage falls on the rats, and produce on them an effect whose magnitude exceeds beyond all proportion the positive amount of the taxation. The Resolutions therefore of the Mechanics are true of one species of taxation, and not the other.

Last in the course of examination, comes the History of 'Swing;' an ominous name at this moment, though there was a time, the auto-biographer declares, when the Miss and Master Swings went to church with their hair pleasingly combed, like the family of any prime minister. The Life and History of Swing is a novel in the manner of Mrs. Hannah Moore's Cheap Repository; and like its predecessors, it is sometimes deficient in attention to probabilities, and accumulates on the head of the hero a greater number of remarkable events than ordinarily fall to the share of an individual. But something of this kind appears to be inseparable from the character of a hero; for he could hardly be one, of whom nothing could be told but what was common to mankind. The present hero was born of a small farmer, on the day on which Mr. Pitt became minister of England; which makes his age about forty-seven. He was intended for college, but his elder brother dying, he took to his father's business instead; and, on the strength probably of his academical prepossessions, married the curate's daughter.

His landlord dies ; and is succeeded by an heir who has no care for Swing, and turns his farm into a fox-cover. On being remonstrated with, the landlord replies, that every man can do what he pleases with his own. Upon which it may be observed, that though landlords may do what they please with their own, it is extremely hard that they should do what they please with what is not their own ; and particularly that they should prohibit other men from selling the produce of their labour, and thereby bring on the state of things which condemns a discharged tenant to starve. Swing, however, starves as he needs must. He makes various efforts to escape, as the caged rats do in like circumstances ; and after selling his stock and cattle at a loss, to support his family, he tries to maintain himself by working as a gardener.

' Up to this period I had never attended a political meeting in my life, nor took any part whatever in politics ; I thought our laws and legislators too good to require alteration or change ; and if I hated one thing more than another, it was Radicalism, the abettors of which I considered no better than rebels and revolutionists, who wanted to destroy our glorious constitution, and cause anarchy in the country. I began, however, now to think otherwise. I had seen all around me, my neighbours reduced from comfort to poverty, and from poverty to the poor-rates ; and as, in the greater number of cases, it had arisen from no fault of their own, it occurred to me that some change was necessary ; as had England been governed as it ought, those things could never have taken place. Reflections of this sort determined me to attend the great meeting at Manchester, then about to be held, and I accordingly went there. Every thing passed quietly off until noon, when, to my horror and surprise, a charge was made by the military and yeomanry on the peaceable and unarmed multitude that were assembled, and I, amongst others, was wounded by a sabre-cut in the arm. Bleeding profusely, and with my arm hanging useless by my side, I went into Manchester and got it dressed ; I was kept awake the entire night by the pain of my wound, but consoled myself with the reflection that immediate and condign punishment would be inflicted on the lawless soldiery who had dared to massacre a peaceable multitude assembled to petition Parliament. " The King," said I, " will certainly send down a commission to have the monsters tried for their bloodthirsty outrage." What was my astonishment and indignation, in ten days after, when I saw a letter from the Secretary of State, thanking in the King's name, the military and magistrates, for massacring the people at Manchester.'

' I no longer wanted a proof that our country was sadly misgoverned,—that a great change was necessary,—and that the Reformers were the only real friends of the people.'—*p.* 4.

There are parts of this, that would do no discredit to De Foe. The unfortunate ex-collegian (if he can be called *ex* who was

never *in*) gets well of his arm, but unhappily employs it in picking up a partridge, and finds himself once more at issue with his enemies. He goes the ordinary course, which all mankind must do who pick up partridges. He gets free after six months, and is just in time to meet a demand upon his garden for two years tithes. The tithes devour his cow; and new claims of the same kind send him to be harnessed to the parish cart, that last scene where "the envy of surrounding nations" are ground down into increased rents for the framers of the Corn Laws. In his wrath he writes a threatening letter, and signs it 'Swing.' The curate's daughter dies, as she had better have done before. His children crawl under a stack for shelter, and set it on fire by accident; and the next morning finds the neighbourhood filled with charges against 'Swing.'

A publication of this kind must have vast effect in carrying through a country the sense of wrong, and the eager desire to get rid of it. And the government must be of extraordinary mould, which at such a period engages itself in contests with the press at the instigation of political rivals, instead of applying itself to the reduction of the causes of complaint. A Bourbon government made an aide-de-camp wait twenty minutes, while Paris was filled with strife; the rule of three will give the policy of waiting for three months. From the landlords there is little to expect. They will sacrifice all and every body, for the smallest chance of putting off the evil day. At present, they seem to look on the church as the first victim; and there are only the fundholders to come next. If the revenues of the church are attacked to save the landlords, the man who holds funded property afterwards, deserves what he will get. Either this Polyphemus of the landed interest must be got the better of, or the only consolation left for any body will be to be eaten last.*

* For illustration of the effects of the Corn Laws as regards foreign trade, see the concluding part of the Article on the EUROPEAN REVOLUTION from No. XXVII. Published separately, Price One Penny.

THE END.

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